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- 9.—*The History of Henry the Fifth, King of England, Lord of Ireland, and Heir of France.* By GEORGE MAKEPEACE TOWLE, author of "Glimpses of History." New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1866. 8vo. pp. viii., 473.

THE reign of "the Fifth Henry of Lancaster" forms one of the most brilliant portions of English history, according to that popular judgment which assigns the highest places to the destroyers of the human race; but Mr. Towle assumes more than usual biographical privileges when he asserts that "in that reign the military glory of England reached its zenith," that "the military taste and habit had arrived at their full ripeness," and that "the conquest of France was completed." Henry V. did not carry England's glory any higher than it had been carried by Edward III.; and the Black Prince's victory at Poitiers was as striking an event as the victory of Agincourt. The conquest of France was not completed in Henry V.'s reign. It might have been completed had Henry lived a few years after 1422; but when, in that year, he died, not even France north of the Loire had been all subdued to English sway, while beyond that great divisional line loyalty to the house of Valois was the rule. All that Henry had accomplished, seven years after Agincourt, and against a nation torn by the wildest contests of faction, amounted to no more than the establishment of a base of operations; and so imperfectly was his work done, that his successors were unable to perfect it, though his brother, the Duke of Bedford, was not his inferior either as a statesman or a soldier. To speak of Henry V. as the conqueror of France is as incorrect as it would be to speak of Philip II. as her conqueror because of the success of the Spanish arms at St. Quentin. Nor is the error a trivial one, for it conveys an erroneous idea of the state of affairs at Henry's death, and is as unjust to those who sought to accomplish his task as it is to the French nation. Had France been conquered at the close of Henry's reign, nothing would have remained to do but to transfer the seat of empire to Paris, and England would have entered upon that provincial life to which Henry's success certainly would have doomed her. It is not the least extraordinary of the many strange things in history, that the most popular of the old kings of England, and the hero of fiction as well as of fact, should owe his popularity through more than twelve generations of Englishmen to his partial success in a policy that could not have been made to triumph without having degraded England to the position of Languedoc or Provence. Mr. Towle does not note this vicious characteristic of Henry's grand project, but other historians have noted it; and the best of English

historical writers express thankfulness that their countrymen of the first half of the fifteenth century were so completely defeated in and beaten out of France that no serious attempt has since been made by England to conquer that country. They are right, and their judgment may be classed with that of other Englishmen who rejoice that England failed in the war of the American Revolution.

Henry V.'s ultimate purpose was to make himself master of France, and that he should have formed that purpose proves him to have been a man of lawless ambition. He could not plead even the claim that had been set up by his great-grandfather, Edward III., to the French crown. Had that claim been worth anything, the person upon whom it devolved was the Earl of March, who was, according to what in late days has been known as the principle of legitimacy, lawful king of England, but who was kept out of his inheritance by Henry V. When Henry resolved to claim the French crown, he must have known that he had in contemplation a proceeding that was indefensible alike on moral and legal grounds. He was a robber on the largest possible scale, and it is only because of the magnitude of his crime that his action is looked upon as if it were honorable. Mr. Towle, in true biographical spirit, invests him with "a mission." Henry, he declares, "did not believe in his right to the French crown; but he did believe that, by possessing it, he would [should] enhance the prosperity and glory of the French people." Is not this attributing to a monarch of the fifteenth century an idea that belongs to the nineteenth? Is it not anticipating Napoleon III. more than four hundred years? If Henry was able to reason so clearly on the condition of France as Mr. Towle assumes, he must have known that in great part the misery of that country was the consequence of the attempt which Edward III. made to obtain the French crown in the preceding century; and he could not have failed to see that a renewal of the war must increase her difficulties. Assuredly he could not expect submission to his demands, and that so great a nation as France would accept the offer of a foreign king to restore its affairs on condition that it should depose a dynasty which was old before the name of Plantagenet had been heard of in connection with royalty. The simple truth is, that Henry's war with France was partly a war of policy and partly a war of ambition. It originated in policy, and it was pursued from ambitious motives after its first purpose was served. The historical facts show this to be the true view of the matter.

The rise of the house of Lancaster to royal power is one of the most singular incidents of the Middle Ages, resembling in some respects the rise of the house of Orléans in the present century. John

of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, cultivated a political power of his own, and, though but the fourth son of Edward III., was one of the principal members of the royal family, — beyond comparison its most influential member after the death of the Black Prince. At what he distinctly aimed it would be difficult to say; perhaps he could not himself have clearly stated his purpose; but the support he at one time gave to Wickliffe identified him with the Reformers of that time, and seemed to establish a connection between them and the house of Lancaster. His son, Henry of Bolingbroke, favored by the folly of Richard II., usurped the crown, and there can be no doubt that his father's course made the way to sovereign power easy for that clever cadet. But Henry IV., instead of adhering to the liberal, reforming ideas to which his father appeared to be partial, chose to ally himself with that reactionary party which followed upon the great movement of the fourteenth century. The statute for the burning of heretics was passed in the early part of his reign. His object was to secure the support of the clergy, and in that way to strengthen a very defective title. The Lollards, much to their surprise, found in him a bitter enemy. Henry V. exaggerated the persecuting policy of his father; but it is hard to decide whether he was the tool of the Church, or made the Church his tool. The clergy, if they did not urge him to claim the French throne, at least zealously supported his intention to claim it. They wished to withdraw popular attention from the plan to spoil the Church; he wished to confirm his power by adding to the military glory of his country, and probably he did not expect to conquer France, a result of war which no English statesman could have counted upon who knew the history of Edward III. and that of the Black Prince. By drawing all the restless spirits of his kingdom into his armies, he would be able to prevent the formation of conspiracies, and the occurrence of civil contests, such as had disturbed the short reign of his father. Add to these considerations the fact that the house of Lancaster had been bitterly assailed and taunted by the house of Valois, — insults which Henry IV. was unable properly to resent, — and we have an intelligible view of Henry V.'s motives in attacking France. The war was political and dynastic in its character and origin. After Henry had been engaged in it for some time, and had arrived at a more extended knowledge of the condition of France, no doubt his purpose expanded, and it became a war of ambition, a contest for the conquest of all the dominions of Charles VI. His own conduct had greatly increased the troubles of the French, and doubtless there were many persons who were for peace at any price. The date of the Treaty of Arras, more than four years after Agincourt,

may be assumed to fix the time when Henry had formed a large and definite plan, which contemplated the transference of the seat of Plantagenet royalty to the banks of the Seine. That he may have formed also some Utopian plan for the welfare of the French people is possible, — and it is not the less possible, that he was about, as he thought, to become their sovereign, and would have an interest in their prosperity; but that he was governed from the first, or at all, by those luminous ideas that are attributed to him by his American historian, does not rest upon evidence. Mr. Towle's Fifth Henry is wellnigh as imaginary a character as the Prince Hal of Shakespeare; but what is pardonable in the poet, and even praiseworthy, considered as a mere work of art, is highly reprehensible in the historian, to whom we ought to be able to look for portraits from the life.

As a soldier, Henry V. was only a conqueror of the vulgar class; and as a sovereign he was a vulgar persecutor, who associated the house of Lancaster with fire and fagot, thus arraying modern historical feeling against the cause of the Red Rose. The two things which are indelibly associated with his name and memory, the French war and the suppression of Lollardy, prepared the way for the fall of his line, and for the extinction of the great house of Plantagenet. He assailed France, originally, to strengthen his dynasty; and when the English were driven from France, the aristocracy were divided into two parties, which butchered each other for possessions that were unequal to the pretensions and the support of both. The nobility had learnt to live on their French spoil in a manner that unfitted them for insular existence; and the weak character of Henry VI. caused their quarrel to affect the succession; so that, for a period of more than two hundred years — from the deposition of Richard II. to the accession of James I. — the succession question was the source of perpetual trouble to the English people and of perpetual terror to English statesmen. This could not have been the case had Henry V. governed England as a wise and liberal sovereign would have governed that country. The deposition of Richard II. would have proved as harmless a proceeding as the deposition of James II., had not “the aspiring blood of Lancaster” led Henry V. to adopt a policy that was productive of ruin to his race. His persecutions of the Lollards, if not so plainly injurious to his house as his French war, undoubtedly had something to do in swelling that torrent of popular disaffection, the guidance of which enabled the leaders of the White Rose party to transfer the crown to the house of York. Of these things Mr. Towle makes no mention. In his view, Henry V.'s history forms a perfect whole. What followed from his action gives him no concern. Thus he neglects one of the highest duties of the historian,

which is to show what was the effect of the adoption and pursuit of a given policy. If Henry's work had ended with him, Mr. Towle's volume would have been a very creditable book; but as the evil he did, like most evil, was long-lived, and in some respects affects the world at the present time, that volume is very defective, and falls far short of the true historical standard. It is not enough for the reader that the author shows, or enables him to understand, that Henry V. was a combination of benevolence and bullying, of religion and rapine, — that he was a Catholic Puritan and a successful soldier; something more is demanded, and that something is here wanting, — because the author knew that the moment he should begin to sum up the effect of his hero's deeds, he would necessarily enter upon a sentence of condemnation, if regard should be had for truth. Looking at the consequences of Henry's conduct, he must be pronounced one of the greatest failures in history.

Mr. Towle's book has considerable merit. It shows familiarity with its subject, a scrupulous consultation of all authorities accessible to an American writing at home, and liberality of sentiment. Its failings are hero-worship — which blinds the author to his hero's faults, and disposes him to see only the better points of his character — and a style that is ever aiming at eloquence, and which often sinks into tumidity. There are passages in his book that show he can write naturally; and if he will imitate them in that *Life of Margaret of Anjou* on which report says he is engaged, and always restrain his tendency to rhetorical excess, he will take respectable rank among living historical writers. His faults are such as are easily corrected, if he is a man of sense, and not above profiting from lessons which able men in all times have condescended to receive even from those whom they could fairly regard as inferiors. It is because we wish him to succeed that we have dwelt chiefly on his defects, in the hope that we shall not see them repeated.

10. — *The United States during the War.* — By AUGUSTE LAUGEL.
New York: Baillière Brothers. 1866. 8vo. pp. xv., 313.

THE art of travelling so as to understand a foreign country and its inhabitants has never been much practised. There have always been good observers, men quick to see, but few among them have really understood what they saw. To the Greeks and the Romans travelling was but the means of confirming their sense of superiority to the rest of the world. The average Englishman, with less reason, finds in travelling the same support of his insular pride. Each nation is a nation